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DE RUEHROV #0060 0931602
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 031602Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0295
INFO WHA DIPL POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 0323

C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 000060

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/3/2016
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [SOCI](#) [FT](#) [MX](#) [BR](#)
SUBJECT: (CORRECTED COPY) HOLY SEE: PROMINENT LATIN AMERICAN
CARDINALS SEEK USG HELP IN PROMOTING FREE TRADE

REF: (A) VATICAN 034, (B) 05 VATICAN 562

CLASSIFIED BY: Christopher Sandrolini, Deputy Chief of Mission,
EXEC, State.
REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In separate meetings, two influential Latin American cardinals told Ambassador Rooney of their concerns for the continent and urged USG support for efforts to promote free trade and understanding of market economies to upper and lower classes in the region. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Taking advantage of their presence in Rome for the recent consistory (at which new cardinals were named, including two Americans - ref A) Ambassador called on Mexican Cardinal Juan Sandoval on March 28, and on Brazilian Cardinal Claudio Hummes on March 29. DCM and Political Officer were present at both meetings.

¶3. (C) Sandoval, after mentioning his personal dream of building a sanctuary in Guadalajara to commemorate Mexican martyrs, echoed some of our Vatican interlocutors in raising concern about the increasing presence of leftist leaders in Latin America - Castro, Chavez, Morales, Kirchner, Bachelet, and perhaps Lopez Obrador - and called it a dangerous trend (ref B). He asked whether President Bush could help. Sandoval said that under Lopez Obrador's governance, crime and violence had risen in Mexico City. (Sandoval also discussed his conviction that his predecessor had been killed by the Mexican government in 1994.)

¶4. (C) Ambassador, agreeing on the importance of the message, noted that A/S Shannon had discussed these issues during his recent visit to the Holy See, and also observed the President Bush had promptly raised this topic with the new papal nuncio in Washington. The cardinals felt the poor in Latin America did not understand the potential benefits to them of free markets and urged USG help, acknowledging that the Church, though necessarily cautious, can also play a greater role.

¶5. (C) Hummes, for his part, talked at length about the slide of the Catholic population in Brazil of about one percent annually for the past three decades, so that by 2000 only 73% of Brazilians identified themselves as Catholic. Matching the fall in Catholics is a rise in numbers of fundamentalists, especially among the poor. According to Hummes, no real dialogue occurs between the Catholic Church and evangelicals. It's very difficult, he said, because the evangelicals are aggressive and anti-Catholic (he mentioned as an example the Assembleia de Dios) -- they focus more now on prosperity here on earth, rather than on the afterlife as they used to do.

¶6. (C) Hummes expressed surprise and approval of Lula as "a good governor, relatively young, different". Hummes lamented Brazil's slow growth at only 2.5% annually, with high rates of tax, interest, and unemployment - he feels Brazil's economy is too conservative, and lacks boldness. By contrast, China and

India have emerged on the world stage, but Brazil has not. The cardinal said Brazil needs to focus on issues such as education, free markets, and strengthening of regional trade groups and agreements such as the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. He characterized Mercosur as weak and worried that the world is not paying attention to Latin America, which still suffers from chaos, weak democracy, and crippling poverty.

¶7. (C) Hummes agreed with ambassador that corruption is a problem and that the Holy See should also pay more attention to Latin America. He noted the role of the Latin American Bishops Council (CELAM) and the potential of next year's planned papal visit to Brazil.

¶8. (U) Note: Sandoval expressed interest in meeting Ambassador Garza. Hummes said he had recently met Consul General McMullen but had not had the opportunity to meet Ambassador Danilovich. End note.

¶9. (C) Comment: The two meetings differed in focus - Sandoval more concerned about Latin American political trends, and Hummes more focused on social and economic troubles in Brazil - but shared an emphasis on the need for better understanding of the power of free trade and free markets in the region, and a hope that the United States government could help bring this about. Ambassador endorsed this view and also encouraged the cardinals to consider how the Catholic Church might contribute to that outcome.

ROONEY